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Rain

In my hurry to meet you at the airport,
I spill tea on my beard.

I remember the time
we went walking in the rain
at midnight in the Berkshires.
"Your beard's all wet," you said.
"So's yours," I said. "Let's kiss
each other dry." But we both got
so excited, we just got wetter and wetter.

Letter to Patrick

So you finally left your angry wife!
How I hated to watch you
cowed beneath the dark cloud of her stare, jump to
orders whenever she commanded,—
You, the free spirit of my youth,
the dancing faun that set alight whole rooms of people
with your devastating smile and energy.

Do you remember the day when we went,
you and I, and a buddy of yours,
up to the lake above Mont Saint Hilaire,
where the birch trees waved their green haze
against the clear blue sky of spring?
How we laughed and fooled around!
I have the photograph to prove it—
You were your old self again.
I want to see that now, to watch you dance,
naked and barefoot, with your children and a
new and happy woman, under a California moon
on the tufted dunes by the sea.

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Trust

(Three Lessons in History)

Enslaved

There was only water
each morning, and
each summer, when
At midnight, the year
midnight began to
and might come if

1.
The great white wall
A cold blue light
like a broken egg
its cry is like your
and gone by.

2.
The white face of
Don't be too fast
spring —
Watch him leap into
in a whisper of air

3.
The bamboo fence
there's no wind or
it's their business to
to build with the air

4.
The cat meows
barks so large —
For what?
Only a single cat
talking in the moon

5.
The farmer's
when he gets a
big red head
will he be in?
No, he's a professor
and he's a

The notorious Mrs. Ford of Wigan,
who poisoned six husbands
and buried them in the cellar,
said on her way to the gallows
she had no regrets.

The neighbors said she always
seemed like such a nice person,
and such a good neighbor,
always lending you sugar
or letting you use her car.
She must have had something going for her.
It certainly wasn't looks.

My grandmother kept a newspaper clipping
of the trial and in the photo Mrs. Ford
looks rather like a sheep with glasses.
Something about her took everybody in.
She must have had charisma.
Those husbands must have been mesmerized.
You'd think the last two or three
Must have been wondering what happened
to the others. Didn't they smell a rat
or two (in the cellar)?

Judas Iscariot must have had charisma,
That's why Christ fell for him.
And wasn't Judas in love with Jesus?
Wasn't that the real reason he hanged
himself after the cross and all that?

I too fall for charisma,
especially when it comes to lovers.
They poison me—
run off with someone else
or just run off.
Afterwards I always say,
"He seemed like such a nice
person." Later I find out he was a speed freak,
a sex addict or just plain loony.

People have said I too have charisma,
but don't worry,
this poem won't poison you.
My poems are, I trust, at very least
what they purport to be.

TEN POEMS WRITTEN AFTER
SEEING THE PAINTINGS OF T'AO-CHI

Prelude

Here we only watch and dream:
each morning's spring,
each summer, afternoon.
At midnight, the year turns;
moonlight strikes the mountain's peak
and migrant birds fly south.

1.
The air is white ash.
A bird flies into it
like a broken fig leaf;
its cry is 'Love gone-by,
Love gone-by...'

2.
The white hare dozes in dawn light.
Don't be fooled. His body's a coiled
spring —
Watch him leap into the morning
in a whoosh of snow!

3.
The bamboo fronds seem to be moving,
there's no wind or rain;
it's their business to appear busy,
to flutter with the joy of giving green.

4.
The cat hisses,
bares its fangs —
For what?
Only a ginkgo leaf
falling in the morning mist.

5.
The fisherman's giving up hope
when he gets a bite.
His little boat tilts;
will he fall in?
No, he's a professional,
and besides, he's hungry!

6.
A sudden rain shower:
a million cylinders of glass
fracturing
turn the road into a xylophone!

7.
The huddle of old men
are so busy arguing philosophy
they don't see the grandeur above them.
The willow trees mock them,
laughing in the wind
like irreverent children.

8.
Heavy the blue evening on the irises;
they don't even look up
as I pass; they are in deep thought—
they are the evening's concubines,
so dedicated to their duties, almost too
lovely to be seen.

9.
The monastery's perched on
a mountain top.
Despite the view,
the monks look up
not down.

10.
The rock is blessed
with a rainbow across it
like the hand of God;
you can't separate rock from rainbow,
or the poet from his longing.

Resolution

I resolved
never to go out with an
unavailable guy ever again —

So then I date a married man
from Italy with five children.

I resolved to buy a cell phone —

So then I made so many calls
to the married man
that I ran up a bill I couldn't pay
so my service was cut off.

My latest resolution
is to make no more resolutions:
So far, I've kept it perfectly.

Cuba

The very word spells
terror in the minds of Presidents,
makes the bank-teller miscount
his bank notes,
the painter pick up his brush,
the writer her pen,
the old lady shout "Bingo!" a little
too loud.

It's that part of us
that has the courage
to take risks:
to dance all night with a stranger,
to talk to the beggar as well as give her money,
to free-fall parachute at seventy
to quit drinking at eighty
to fall in love at ninety
to dance the rumba at a hundred.

It's fire in the heart,
it's passion in the veins,
makes you sing Traviata
in the shower
makes you quit the Internet
and become a Buddhist monk,
makes you move across country
to climb a mountain
just for the hell of it,
it's a celebration,
it's a shout of joy.
It's Cuba,
it's dangerous.

Cavafy

Cavalry in the Castro

Of course I'm shocked!
In my day only subtle signals
propelled you to your goal —
the forbidden sensual pleasure
of a young man's lips and limbs
in a cheap hotel room, or
the shadows of a dark café —
A nod, a smile, the light brush
of hand on sleeve would start the process.
Here, why the young men don't even
have to ask!
At Pasqua coffee shop,
they pet each other's dogs and chat,
then go home together.

Of course that freedom
must be wonderful.
They are so lucky,
yet in my day the thrill was in the
overcoming of impediments to pleasure:
the shame,
the fear of scandal, prison,
loss of jobs;
there was something so delicious
in the longing, the reaching for,
even the impossibility of getting to
the sensual act
that made for romance.
I see little of it here —
impossibility or romance,
and though perhaps
I'd find in minutes
a young man to go home with,
I think perhaps I would decline,
for still I see before me
the young clerk,
that bearded sensualist —
his vivid tie, the purple flower
in his buttonhole, his chestnut locks
combed just so for nonchalant effect
on his tanned brow —

whom I discovered
staring at the rings
in a shop window
and who turned to me
and smiled a moment,
then walked off with the friend
he'd waited for,
the friend he'd spend the night with
on his sagging hotel bed
till dawn light would discover them
scrambling to get their clothes on,
rushing headlong down the stairs
into the street,
one to the left,
one to the right,
on their respective ways to work.

(for Mark Doty)

The Romantic Gets a Reality Check

"When it comes to love," says my friend,
"You're full of shit! You don't really
want to live with the guy in the house on the hill,
you can't stand to be with someone for two hours,
let alone the rest of your life.
You're a melancholy watcher of life.
Oh, you want a servant to bring you coffee at regular intervals,
but you can go to the café for that.
And you want sex,
but you can go to a bar in the Castro for that.
Be at peace with your aloneness.
You're just fine as you are.
Take that tree over there for instance!
See how it blossoms so beautifully on its own,
with no other to stifle it,
no forest to darken its glory?"

NO MORE MONICA

"We were good at movies," you said,
winking at me the night we broke up.
What you meant was, we were good at
making out at the movies — lips splishing,
tongues spiraling into each other,
helter-skelter slick. It was just
foreplay. You didn't love me. You wanted
a mistress, you married devil; I was
your Monica Lewinsky.

Now I want a man who wants to
make love in broad daylight and
all the bones about it, likes to lie
naked on a park bench, so I can
lick him all over, doesn't care who sees.
A man who says, "Let them stare. Let
them stand in line to watch like a row
of flagpoles, shaking their dismayed
red-flag faces." I want a man who's
proud to be my lover, who can jump
on the back of my wheelchair like a
queer Charleton Heston and yell "Ben
Hur! Ben Hur! Ben Hur!" all the way
down Castro Street to the applause
of total strangers.

At The Hospice

I bring you a bunch
of purple fnesia.
How like you they are:
Sweet-scented
Innocent
Handsome
Glamorous
(they don't live long).

Christopher Hewitt

NEWLY BLIND

I am a man of taste and have
many lovely things around
my house. My friends would say
that all my life I've cultivated
beauty far too much--handsome friends,
dashing lovers--I sometimes think
that's why I'm doomed no more to
see. Now I have to search
for beauty that's within.
Seeing with the heart is hard.
I fear I'll never learn the art,
be confined to quick encounters,
helped and helpers. I cannot tell
if they are ugly or have charming faces,
those who guide me over crosswalks,
into elevators, down into the
subway. I cannot sense if,
could I see them, they'd be
the ones I'd trust,
though some I get to talking with,
exchanging numbers. I have to go by
timbre of voice, by delicacy
of touch.

File 67
Hewitt

Individual poems, undated [199-?]

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